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OCTOBER

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8

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PART 47.

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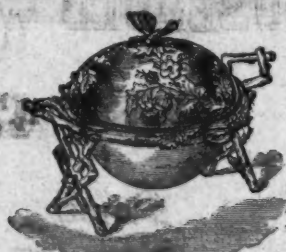
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BY THE AUTHOR OF "THE ROSE AND THE KEY."

### CHAPTER IV. MY FATHER.

FORTH sped Laura Grey's letter to mamma. She was then at Roydon; papa was with her.

The Easter recess had just sent down some distinguished visitors, who were glad to clear their heads for a few days of the hum of the Houses and the smell of the river; and my father, although not in the House, ran down with them. Little Nelly had been his pet, as I was mamma's.

There was an awkwardness in post-office arrangements between the two places then, and letters had to make a considerable circuit. There was a delay of three clear days between the despatch of the letter and the reply.

I must say a word about papa. He was about the most agreeable and careless man on earth.

There are men whom no fortune could keep out of debt. A man of that sort seems to me not to have any defined want or enjoyment, but the horizon of his necessities expands in proportion as he rises in fortune, and always exceeds the ring-fence of his estate. What its periphery may be, or his own real wants, signifies very little. His permanent necessity is always to exceed his revenue.

I don't think my father's feelings were very deep. He was a good-natured husband, but, I am afraid, not a good one. I loved him better than I loved mamma. Children are always captivated by gaiety and indulgence. I was not of an age to judge of higher things, and I never missed the article of religion, of which, I believe, he had none. Although he lived so much in

society that he might almost be said to have no domestic life whatever, no man could be simpler, less suspicious, or more easily imposed upon.

The answer to Miss Grey's letter was the arrival of my father. He was in passionate grief, and in a state of high excitement. He ran up-stairs, without waiting to take off his hat; but at the door of our darling's room he hesitated. I did not know he had arrived till I heard him, some minutes later, walking up and down the room, sobbing. Though he was selfish, he was affectionate. No one liked to go in to disturb him. She lay by this time in her coffin. The tint of clay darkened her pretty features. The angelic beauty that belongs to death is transitory beyond all others. I would not look at her again to obscure its glory. She lay now in her shroud a forlorn sunken image of decay.

When he came out he talked wildly and bitterly. His darling had been murdered, he said, by neglect. He upbraided us all round, including Rebecca Torkill, for our cruel carelessness. He blamed the doctor. He had no right, in a country where there was but one physician, to go so far away as fourteen miles, and to stay away so long. He denounced even his treatment. He ought to have bled her. It was, every one knew, the proper way of treating such a case.

Than Laura Grey no one could have been more scrupulously careful. She could not have prevented, even if she had suspected the possibility of such a thing, her stealing out of bed now and then to look at her sick sparrow. All this injustice was, however, but the raving of his grief.

In poor little Nelly's room my father's affectionate nature was convulsed with sorrow. When he came down I cried with



him for a long time. I think this affliction had drawn us nearer. He was more tender to me than I ever remembered him before.

At last the ghastly wait and suspense were ended. I saw no more strange faces on the lobbies, and the strange voices on the stairs and footsteps in the room, and the muffled sounds that made me feel faint, were heard no more. The funeral was over, and pretty Nelly was gone for ever and ever, and I would come in and go out, and read my books, and take my walks alone, and the flowers, and the long summer evenings, and the songs of birds would come again, and the leaves make their soft shadow in the nooks where we used to sit together in the wood, but gentle little Nelly would never come again.

During these terrible days Laura Grey was a sister to me, both in affection and in sorrow. Oh, Laura, can I ever forget your tender, patient sympathy? How often my thoughts recal your loved face as I lay my head upon my lonely pillow, and my blessings follow you over the wide sea to your far-off home!

Papa took a long solitary ride that day through the warren and away by Penruthyn Priory, and did not return till dark.

When he did, he sent for me. I found him in the room which, in the old-fashioned style, was called the oak parlour. A log fire—we were well supplied from the wood in the rear of the house—lighted the room with a broad pale flicker. My father was looking ill and tired. He was leaning with his elbow on the mantelpiece, and said:

"Ethel, darling, I want to know what you would like best. We are going abroad for a little time; it is the only thing for your mamma. This place would kill her. I shall be leaving this to-morrow afternoon, and you can make up your mind which you would like best—to come with us and travel for some months, or to wait here, with Miss Grey, until our return. You shall do precisely whatever you like best—I don't wish you to hurry yourself, darling. I'd rather you thought it over at your leisure."

Then he sat down and talked about other things; and turned about to the fire, with his decanter of sherry by him, and drank a good many glasses, and leaned back in his chair before he had finished it.

My father, I thought, was dozing, but I was not sure; and being a good deal in awe of him—a natural consequence of seeing so little of him—I did not venture either to waken him, or to leave the room without his permission.

There are two doors in that room. I was standing irresolutely near that which is next the window, when the other opened, and the long whiskers and good-humoured, sensible face of portly Wynne Williams, the town-clerk and attorney of Cardyllion, entered. My father awoke, with a start, at the sound, and seeing him, smiled and extended his hand.

"How d'ye do, Williams? It's so good of you to come. Sit down. I'm off to-morrow, so I sent you a note. Try that sherry; it is better than I thought. And now I must tell you, that old scoundrel, Rokestone, is going to foreclose the mortgage, and they have served one of the tenants at Darlip with an ejectment; that's more serious; I fancy he means mischief there also. What do you think?"

"I always thought he might give us annoyance there; but Mandrick's opinion was with us. Do you wish me to look after that?"

"Certainly. And he's bothering me about that trust."

"I know," said Mr. Wynne Williams, with rather gloomy rumination.

"That fellow has lost me, I was reckoning it up only a day or two ago, between five and six thousand pounds in mere law costs; beside all the direct mischief he has done me; and he has twice lost me a seat in the House, first by maintaining that petition at King's Firkins, a thing that must have dropped but for his money; he had nothing on earth to do with it, and no motive but his personal, fiendish feelings; and next by getting up the contest against me at Shillingsworth, where, you know, it was ten to one, by Heavens! I should have had a walk over. There is not an injury that man could do me he has not done. I can prove that he swore he would strip me of everything I possessed. It is ever so many years since I saw him—you know all about it—and the miscreant pursues me still, relentlessly. He swore to old Dymock, I'm told, and I believe it, that he would never rest till he had brought me to a prison. I could have him before a jury for that. There's some remedy, I suppose, there's some protection? If I had done what I wished ten years ago, I'd have had him out; it's not too late yet to try whether pistols can't settle it. I wish I had not taken advice; in a matter like that, the man who does, always does wrong. I dare say, Williams, you think with me, now it's a case for cutting the Gordian knot?"

"I should not advise it, sir; he's an old



man, and he's not afraid of what people say, and people know he has fought. He'd have you in the Queen's Bench, and as his feelings are of that nature, I'd not leave him the chance—I wouldn't trust him."

"It's not easy to know what one should do—a miscreant like that. I hope and pray that the curse of—"

My father spoke with a fierce tremble in his voice, and at that moment he saw me. He had forgotten that I was in the room, and said instantly:

"You may as well run away, dear; Mr. Williams and I have some business to talk over; and tiresome business it is. Good night, darling."

So away I went, glad of my escape, and left them talking. My father rang the bell soon, and called for more wine; so I suppose the council sat till late.

I joined Laura Grey, to whom I related all that had passed, and my decision on the question; which was, to remain with her at Malory.

She kissed me, and said, after a moment's thought, "But will they think it unkind of you, preferring to remain here?"

"No," I said; "I think I should be rather in the way if I went; and, beside, I know papa is never high with any one, and really means what he says; and I should feel a little strange with them. They are very kind, and love me very much, I know, and so do I love them; but I see them so little, and you are such a friend, and I don't wish to leave this place; I like it better than any other in all the world; and I feel at home with you, more than I could with any one else in the world."

So that point was settled; and next day papa took leave of me very affectionately; and, notwithstanding his excited language, I heard nothing more of pistols and Mr. Rokestone.

But many things were to happen before I saw papa again.

I remained, therefore, at Malory, and Laura Grey with me; and the shadow of Mr. Carmel passed the window every evening, but he did not come in to see us, as he used. He made inquiries at the door instead, and talked, sometimes for five minutes together, with Rebecca Torkill. I was a little hurt at this; I did not pretend to Laura to perceive it; but, in our walks, or returning, in the evening, if by chance I saw his tall, thin, but graceful figure approaching by the same path, I used to make her turn aside and avoid him

by a detour. In so lonely a place as Malory the change was marked; and there was pain in that neglect. I would not let him fancy, however, that I wished, any more than he, to renew our old and near acquaintance.

So weeks passed away, and leafy May had come, and Laura Grey and I were sitting in our accustomed room, in the evening, talking in our desultory way.

"Don't you think papa very handsome?" I asked.

"Yes, he is handsome," she answered; "there is something refined as well as clever in his face; and his eyes are fine; and all that goes a great way. But many people might think him not actually handsome, though very good-looking and prepossessing."

"They must be hard to please," I said.

She smiled good-naturedly.

"Mamma fell in love with him at first sight, Rebecca Torkill says," I persisted, "and mamma was not easily pleased. There was a gentleman who was wildly in love with her; a man of very old family, Rebecca says, and good-looking, but she would not look at him when once she had seen papa."

"I think I heard of that. He is a baronet now; but he was a great deal older than Mr. Ware, I believe."

"Yes, he was; but Rebecca says he did not look ten years older than papa, and he was very young indeed then," I answered. "It was well for mamma she did not like him, for I once heard Rebecca say that he was a very bad man."

"Did you ever hear of mamma's aunt Lorrimer?" I resumed, after a little pause.

"Not that I recollect."

"She is very rich, Rebecca says. She has a house in London, but she is hardly ever there. She's not very old—not sixty. Rebecca is always wondering who she will leave her money to; but that don't much matter, for I believe we have more than we want. Papa says, about ten years ago, she lived for nothing but society, and was everywhere; and now she has quite given up all that, and wanders about the Continent."

Our conversation subsided; and there was a short interval in which neither spoke.

"Why is it, Laura," said I, after this little silence, "that you never tell me anything about yourself, and I am always telling you everything I think or remember? Why are you so secret? Why don't you tell me your story?"

"My story; what does it signify? I suppose it is about an average story. Some people are educated to be governesses; and some of us take to it later, or by accident; and we are amateurs, and do our best. The Jewish custom was wise; every one should learn a mechanic's business. Saint Paul was a tent-maker. If fortune upsets the boat, it is well to have anything to lay hold of—anything rather than drowning; an hospital matron, a companion, a governess, there are not many chances when things go wrong, between a poor woman and the workhouse."

"All this means, you will tell me nothing," I said.

"I am a governess, darling. What does it matter what I was? I am happier with you than ever I thought I could be again. If I had a story that was pleasant to hear, there is no one on earth I would tell it to so readily; but my story— There is no use in thinking over misfortune," she continued; "there is no greater waste of time than regretting, except wishing. I know, Ethel, you would not pain me. I can't talk about those things yet; I may another time."

"You shan't speak of them, Laura, unless you wish it. I am ashamed of having bothered you so." I kissed her. "But, will you tell me one thing, for I am really curious about it? I have been thinking about that very peculiar-looking old gentleman, who wore a chocolate-coloured great coat, and met us in the Mill-walk, and talked to you, you remember, on the Sunday we returned from church that way. Now I want you to tell me, is that old man's name Rokestone?"

"No, dear, it is not; I don't think he even knows him. But isn't it time for us to have our tea? Will you make it, while I put our books up in the other room?"

So I undertook this office, and was alone.

The window was raised, the evening warm, and the sun by this time setting. It was the pensive hour when solitude is pleasant; when grief is mellowed, and even a thoughtless mind, like mine, is tinged with melancholy. I was thinking now of our recluse neighbour. I had seen him pass, as Miss Grey and I were talking.

He still despatched those little notes about the inmates of Malory; for mamma always mentioned, when she wrote to me, in her wanderings on the Continent, that she had heard from Mr. Carmel that I was well, and was out every day with my

governess, and so on. I wondered why he had quite given up those little weekly visits, and whether I could have unwittingly offended him.

These speculations would recur oftener than, perhaps, was quite consistent with the disdain I affected on the subject. But people who live in cities have no idea how large a space in one's thoughts, in a solitude like Malory, a neighbour at all agreeable must occupy.

I was ruminating in a great arm-chair, with my hand supporting my head, and my eyes fixed on my foot, which was tapping the carpet, when I heard the cold, clear voice of Mr. Carmel at the window. I looked up, and my eyes met his.

#### CHAPTER V. THE LITTLE BLACK BOOK.

OUR eyes met, I said; they remained fixed for a moment, and then mine dropped. I had been, as it were, detected, while meditating upon this capricious person. I dare say I even blushed; I certainly was embarrassed. He was repeating his salutation, "How d'ye do, Miss Ware?"

"Oh, I'm very well, thanks, Mr. Carmel," I answered, looking up; "and—and I heard from mamma on Thursday. They are very well; they are at Geneva now. They are thinking of going to Florence in about three weeks."

"I know; yes. And you have no thoughts of joining them?"

"Oh, none! I should not like to leave this. They have not said a word about it lately."

"It is such a time, Miss Ethel, since I had the pleasure of seeing you—I don't mean, of course, at a distance, but near enough to ask you how you are. I dared not ask to see you too soon, and I thought—I fancied—you wished your walks uninterrupted."

I saw that he had observed my strategy; I was not sorry.

"I have often wished to thank you, Mr. Carmel; you were so very kind."

"I had no opportunity, Miss Ethel," he answered, with more feeling than before. "My profession obliges me to be kind—but I had no opportunity—Miss Grey is quite well?"

"She is very well, thanks."

With a softened glory, in level lines, the beams of the setting sun broke, scattered, through the trunks of the old elms, and one touched the head of the pale young man, as he stood at the window, looking in; his delicate and melancholy features

were in the shade, and the golden light, through his thick, brown hair, shone softly, like the glory of a saint.

As, standing thus, he looked down in a momentary reverie, Laura Grey came in, and paused, in manifest surprise, on seeing Mr. Carmel at the window.

I smiled, in spite of my efforts to look grave, and the governess advancing, asked the young ecclesiastic how he was. Thus recalled, by a new voice, he smiled and talked with us for a few minutes. I think he saw our tea-equipage, and fancied that he might be, possibly, in the way; for he was taking his leave, when I said:

"Mr. Carmel, you must take tea before you go."

"Tea; I find it very hard to resist; will you allow me to take it, like a beggarman, at the window; I shall feel less as if I were disturbing you; for you have only to shut the window down, when I grow prosy."

So, laughing, Laura Grey gave him a cup of tea, which he placed on the window-stone, and seating himself a little sideways on the bench that stands outside the window, he leaned in, with his hat off, and sipped his tea, and chatted; and sitting as Miss Grey and I did, near the window, we made a very sociable little party of three.

I had quite given up the idea of our renewing our speaking acquaintance with Mr. Carmel, and here we were, talking away, on more affable terms than ever! It seemed to me like a dream.

I don't say that Mr. Carmel was chatting with the insouciance and gaiety of a French abbé. There was, on the contrary, something very peculiar, both in his countenance and manner, something that suggested the life and sufferings of an ascetic. Something also, not easily defined, of command; I think it was partly in the severe though gentle gravity with which he spoke anything like advice or opinion.

I felt a little awed in his presence, I could not exactly tell why; and yet I was more glad than I would have confessed, that we were good friends again.

He sipped his cup of tea slowly, as he talked, and was easily persuaded to take another.

"I see, Miss Ethel, you are looking at my book with curious eyes."

It was true; the book was a very thick and short volume, bound in black shagreen, with silver clasps, and lay on the window-stone, beside his cup. He took it up in his slender fingers, smiling as he looked at me.

"You wish to know what it is; but you

are too ceremonious to ask me. I should be curious myself, if I saw it for the first time. I have often picked out a book from a library, simply for its characteristic binding. Some books look interesting. Now what do you take this to be?"

"Haven't you books called breviaries? I think this is one," said I.

"That is your guess; it is not a bad one—but no; it is not a breviary. What do you say, Miss Grey?"

"Well, I say, it is a book of the offices of the Church."

"Not a bad guess, either. But it is no such thing. I think I must tell you; it is what you would call a story-book."

"Really!" I exclaimed, and Miss Grey and I simultaneously conceived a longing to borrow it.

"The book is two hundred and seventy years old, and written in very old French. You would call them stories," he said, smiling on the back of the book; "but you must not laugh at them; for I believe them all implicitly. They are legends."

"Legends?" said I, eagerly; "I should so like to hear one. Do, pray, tell one of them."

"I'll read one, if you command me, into English. They are told, here, as shortly as it is possible to relate them. Here, for instance, is a legend of John of Parma. I think I can read it in about two minutes."

"I'm sorry it is so short; do, pray, begin," I said.

Accordingly, there being still light enough to read by, he translated the legend as follows:

"John of Parma, general of the order of Friars Minors, travelling one winter's night, with some brothers of the order, the party went astray in a dense forest, where they wandered about for several hours, unable to find the right path. Wearied with their fruitless efforts, they at length knelt down, and having commended themselves to the protection of the mother of God, and of their patron, Saint Francis, began to recite the first nocturn of the Office of the blessed Virgin. They had not been long so engaged, when they heard a bell in the distance, and rising at once, and following the direction whence the sound proceeded, soon came to an extensive abbey, at the gate of which they knocked for admittance. The doors were instantly thrown open, and within they beheld a number of monks evidently awaiting their arrival, who, the moment they appeared, led them to a fire, washed their feet, and then seated them

at a table, where supper stood ready; and having attended them during their meal, they conducted them to their beds. Wearied with their toilsome journey, the other travellers slept soundly; but John, rising in the night to pray, as was his custom, heard the bell ring for matins, and quitting his cell, followed the monks of the abbey to the chapel, to join with them in reciting the divine office.

"Arrived there, one of the monks began with this verse of the Thirty-fifth Psalm, '*Ibi ceciderunt qui operantur iniquitatem*;' to which the choir responded, '*Expulsi sunt nec potuerunt stare*.' Startled by the strange despairing tone in which the words were intoned, as well as by the fact that this is not the manner in which matins are usually commenced, John's suspicions were aroused, and addressing the monks, he commanded them, in the name of the Saviour, to tell him who and what they were. Thus adjured, he who appeared an abbot replied, that they were all angels of darkness, who, at the prayer of the blessed Virgin, and of Saint Francis, had been sent to serve him and his brethren in their need. As he spoke, all disappeared; and next moment John found himself and his companions in a grotto, where they remained, absorbed in prayer and singing the praises of God, until the return of day enabled them to resume their journey."

"How picturesque that is," I said, as he closed the little book.

He smiled, and answered: "So it is. Dryden would have transmuted such a legend into noble verse; painters might find great pictures in it; but, to the faithful, it is more. To me, these legends are sweet and holy readings, telling how the goodness, vigilance, and wisdom of God work by miracles for his children, and how these celestial manifestations have never ceased throughout the history of his Church on earth. To you they are, as I said, but stories; as such you may wish to look into them. I believe, Miss Grey, you may read them without danger." He smiled gently, as he looked at the governess.

"Oh, certainly, Laura!" cried I; "I am so much obliged."

"It is very kind of you," said Miss Grey. "They are, I am sure, very interesting; but does this little book contain anything more?"

"Nothing, I am afraid, that could possibly interest you; nothing, in fact, but a few litanies, and what we call elevations—you will see in a moment. There is nothing

controversial. I am no proselytiser, Miss Grey"—he laughed a little—"my duty is quite of a different kind. I am collecting authorities, making extracts and precis, and preparing a work, not all my own, for the press, under a greater than I."

"Recollect, Laura, it is lent to me—isn't it, Mr. Carmel?" I pleaded, as I took the little volume and turned over its pages.

"Very well—certainly," he acquiesced, smiling.

He stood up now; the twilight was deepening; he laid his hand on the window sash, and leaned his forehead upon it, as he looked in, and continued to chat for a few minutes longer; and then, with a slight adieu, he left us.

When he was gone, we talked him over a little.

"I wonder what he is—a priest only or a Jesuit," said I; "or, perhaps, a member of some other order. I should like so much to know."

"You'd not be a bit wiser if you did," said Laura.

"Oh, you mean because I know nothing of those orders; but I could easily make out. I think he would have told us to-night, in the twilight, if we had asked him."

"I don't think he would have told us anything he had not determined beforehand to tell. He has told us nothing about himself we did not know already. We know he is a Roman Catholic, and an ecclesiastic—his tonsure proclaims that; and your mamma told you that he is writing a book, so that is no revelation either. I think he is profoundly reserved, cautious, and resolute; and with a kind of exterior gentleness, he seems to me to be really inflexible and imperious."

"I like that unconscious air of command, but I don't perceive those signs of cunning and reserve. He seemed to grow more communicative the longer he stayed," I answered.

"The darker it grew," she replied. "He is one of those persons who become more confident the more effectually their countenances are concealed. There ceases to be any danger of a conflict between looks and language—a danger that embarrasses some people."

"You are suspicious this evening," I said. "I don't think you like him."

"I don't know him; but I fancy that, talk as he may to us, neither you nor I have for one moment a peep into his real mind. His world may be perfectly celestial



and serene, or it may be an ambitious, dark, and bad one; but it is an invisible world for us."

The candles were by this time lighted, and Miss Grey was closing the window, when the glitter of the silver clasp of the little book caught her eye.

"Have you found anything?" said I.

"Only the book—I forgot all about it. I am almost sorry we allowed him to lend it."

"We borrowed it; I don't think he wanted to lend it," said I; "but, however it was, I'm very glad we have got it. One would fancy you had lighted on a scorpion. I'm not afraid of it; I know it can't do any one the least harm, for they are only stories."

"Oh, I think so. I don't see myself that they can do any harm; but I am almost sorry we have got into that sort of relation with him."

"What relation, Laura?"

"Borrowing books, and discussing them."

"But we need not discuss them; I won't—and you are so well up in the controversy with your two books of theology, that I think he's in more danger of being converted than you. Give me the book, and I'll find out something to read to you."

#### AN ARABIAN SEAPORT IN WAR TIME.

"CALL this 'ere thing a town? I'll tell yer what I calls it—an island o' dirt in a hocean o' sand! To think o' sticking up them 'arf-dozen pigsties in the middle o' a big waste like that there! Why, blest if they don't look as silly as a ha'porth o' treacle in a two-gallon jug!"

Such is the uncompromising verdict of our chief engineer upon the little Arab seaport off which we anchored after dark last night; and it must be owned that he is not altogether wrong. Perched on the boundary line between the great sea and the everlasting wilderness, this little speck of human life does indeed look mean and pigmy. Look where we will, it is the same panorama of unending desolation. Behind, the boundless emptiness of the sailless sea; above, the bright, cloudless, cruel sky; and, far to right and far to left, and miles upon miles onward in front, the dull brassy yellow of the unchanging desert, melting at last into the quivering haze of intense heat that hovers along the horizon. Over this waste, twelve hundred years ago,

Mahomet and his apostles of the sword came rushing like a flight of vultures, flinging themselves blindly upon an enterprise whose issue no man could foresee. Since that day almost all the face of the world has changed beyond recognition; but this strange old country, which Time himself appears to have forgotten, is still the same in every feature as when Khaled was thundering at the gates of Damascus, and Amrou watching the lapping flames of the Alexandrian Library. Were we to see the Prophet and his host come spurring from behind these long, even sand-ridges, we could hardly feel surprised; but his first glance along the shore would sorely surprise him. For yonder, behind that low, massive white wall that stands up stark and bare in the blistering sunshine, scores of gaunt, swarthy men in white tunics sit watching beside their piled muskets—true Moslems every man of them, yet encamped as invaders on the soil which every Moslem holds sacred—with the creed of the Prophet on their lips day and night, yet dipping their hands in the blood of his descendants. The Yemen insurrection is in full blaze, and this port is the Balaklava of the Turkish armament.

In and out, in and out—the long white coils of the coral reefs showing on every side through the clear, still water, as our jolly-boat zigzags among them—till at last we thread our way out of the labyrinth, and run alongside a long, low jetty of planks rudely lashed together. Out we leap, all five of us, like explorers landing in a new world; the captain, a short, square, jolly-looking man with an immense brown beard; the engineer, a brawny Geordie from South Shields, imbued with a thoroughly English contempt for everything foreign; myself, with the complexion of a lime-burner and the dress of a scarecrow; our interpreter, a tall, solemn-faced Greek, defying the climate by a complete suit of black; and last, but certainly not least, Achmet Bey, the Turkish officer in command of our convoy, fattest and laziest of the true believers whom we have on board, eating for one hour, and sleeping for twenty-three.

Here, at last, are some living creatures coming toward us along the shore—not the Prophet and his myrmidons—but a string of Arab camel-drivers, whose dark sinewy limbs and supple grace of movement would gladden the eye of a sculptor. Behind them come the djemels, with their long noiseless stride, bowing their necks for-



ward, and fixing their large, mild, dreamy brown eyes wistfully upon the cool sparkling water into which they are about to plunge. Further back upon the jetty itself appear little knots of lounging Arabs, some in long white burnouses, some in cotton drawers, and not a few perfectly nude; but distinguished, one and all, by a peculiarity which our critical engineer is not slow to observe.

"Well, by jingo," he remarks, with contemptuous surprise, "I'm blest if them there ugly-lookin' red herrins ain't got chignons on, every man Jack on 'em!"

Such is indeed the case. As if it were not sufficient to stand bareheaded in this merciless glare (one hundred and thirty-seven degrees Fahrenheit), these hobgoblins have actually shaved their heads up to the crown of the scalp, leaving the occiput one great bush three or four inches in diameter, the whole effect being irresistibly suggestive of a scalded parrot. They give us merely a careless glance as we pass by; but at the sight of the bey's gorgeous uniform, there flits over their lean, wolfish faces a momentary gleam which speaks volumes. But the stout Osmanli stalks by unheeding, looking down upon them as they sidle out of his way with a grand and massive contempt, which almost savours of the heroic. Among these low sand-hills and little reed-thatched hovels, scores of his countrymen have been foully murdered, and the cruel expectation that looks askance at us out of the eyes of these gaunt, black, silent figures in their white, shroud-like dresses, shows that the native thirst for blood is still unslaked. Once ashore in this hostile region, Achmet Bey's life is in his hand, and he knows it, though the knowledge does not for a moment disturb his haughty composure. Heavy, sensual, indolent, unprogressive—benumbed by the cramping influences of a bigoted conservatism and a barbarous superstition—the Turk has still within him the spirit of the men who fought at Yermouk and Aleppo; and not without reason does our stalwart engineer (himself as brave a man as ever breathed) mutter to himself in grim approbation, "By jingo, that 'ere old dump-ling's got some pluck in him arter all!"

We unfurl our huge white umbrellas, which give us the look of laden merchantmen under a press of sail, and plod steadily onward, past huge dry fosses, cracked and parched like a newly-baked brick; past long rows of tents, whence lean, dark, bearded faces stare curiously after us; past lines of

casks and pyramids of flour-sacks, which, landed weeks ago for immediate transmission to the interior, still remain as a monument of the zeal and fidelity of the resident pasha ("And some poor devils dyin' all the time for want of 'em, belike," remarks our skipper, indignantly); past couching camels, with their legs wrapped up, and tucked away out of sight, and their long necks outstretched upon the earth in lazy enjoyment. At last the cool shadowy gateway of the Turkish fort opens before us, and the white-coated sentries, who are basking in the shade, survey our burning faces with a grin of conscious superiority.

At this point our paths diverge, the Turk strolling off to visit a brother officer of the garrison, the engineer plunging into the town in search of "summut to drink" (always the first duty of the true Englishman on foreign soil), and the captain and myself, with our interpreter, to make obeisance to the pasha. The great man, however, like other officials nearer home, is anything but easy to find when wanted. I will not burden my readers with the details of our search for, and discovery of, him; our tramp round the barrack square, as if we had come to relieve guard; our game of hide-and-seek with the Turkish soldiers, who either profess utter ignorance of their chief's whereabouts, or minutely direct us wrong; our final scramble up a kind of foreshortened ladder, and headlong tumble into a queer little lighthouse made up of half a dozen windows patched together, in the midst of which, on a huge wooden tea-tray, squats a little shrivelled man, not unlike a smoked haddock, who, on inquiry, turns out to be Nazif Pasha himself, the Lord of Life and Giver of all Good, before whom we have literally fallen down. Suffice it to say that we go through all the prescribed forms of the Arabian Nights Entertainments, sitting cross-legged upon cushions, sipping real Arabian coffee, without cream or sugar, black as ink, and strong as brandy, served in handleless cups fitted into small silver stands, and administered by a bonâ fide tall black slave, whom the pasha (better still!) summons by actually clapping his hands! At length, after an interview of about half an hour, we depart with our business satisfactorily untransacted (the usual fate of those who have to deal with a pasha), and file off through the opposite gate, which opens direct into the town. Here we are met by the chief engineer, who announces, in a tone of pardonable excitement, that he has

"found a shop, a real live shop, by jingo! and a man in it, selling liquor." The captain and interpreter lick their lips, and make haste to follow him, while I bring up the rear.

And now, for the first time since entering the Suez Canal, we see an Arab town in its true colours. Port Saïd is a French town with an Arab population. Ismailia is a European picture in an Eastern frame. Suez, uniting all races, belongs distinctively to none. Djeddah, despite its motley conflux of pilgrims, and the barbaric picturesqueness of its wonderful bazaar, is more Turkish than Arabic, and more Maltese than either. But here, at Koomfidah, we see the exact realisation of the ancient Arab camp, the symbol of those tameless guerillas to whom the proudest of earth's cities were but as wayside hostelries, to be each in turn used and forsaken. All around the fort, sown broadcast over the flat sandy plain, lie tiny hovels of wickerwork daubed with mud,\* and rudely thatched with reeds or palm-leaves, as though a monster picnic had suddenly broken up, leaving behind several hundred empty hampers. Under the shadow of the wall itself runs a line of more pretentious dwellings, stronger, larger, more solid, with projecting thatches, which, nearly meeting overhead, fill the whole avenue with a kind of semi-twilight, through which the black grinning skeletons, in their long white robes, flit like a procession of spectres. A motley throng! Portly traders in fringed burnouses, and half-stripped camel-drivers, with thick woolly hair; stalwart Turkish soldiers, marching defiantly through the mass of scowling faces; gaunt, wild-eyed dervishes, naked to the waist, with little copper chains round their necks, and long white beards flowing over their swarthy chests in a way suggestive of a black doll which has burst and let out all its stuffing; long files of striding camels, heralded by a scream of "Wah!" (look out!), and seeming, in the midst of these little toy houses, doubly gigantic. On this side a turbaned fruit-seller thrusts a pulp of crushed dates (with the corpses of countless flies adhering to it) enticingly towards us in his grimy fingers; on that a fish-dealer is strewing leaves over his stock, to protect them against the swarming insects that buzz around them. A little further on, a villanous-looking old grey beard is frizzling some chips of fat

meat in a very dirty pan, while a dozen grimy customers, crouched on their hams around him, eagerly await the promised dainty. And yonder, amid a circle of admiring ragamuffins, appears our Arab pilot (who has already made ducks and drakes of the first instalment of his hire), in a huge yellow turban, which gives him the look of a pork sausage with a dab of mustard on it.

Ploughing our way through this chaos we reach at length the shop discovered by the chief engineer, in front of which a number of tins and small boxes, with the London trade-mark upon them, welcome us like old friends. A huge broad-shouldered man in a Bombay hat, who is standing at the door with a half-empty glass in his hand, turns round as we approach, and he and our engineer burst forth simultaneously:

"Hallo, Jack, is this yourself?"

"Why, Bill, old boy, what wind's blown you here?"

"Just up from Hodeidah, with the Turkish despatch-boat, and haven't we got news for the Constantinople folk, just. Let's have a drain, and then I'll tell you all about it."

We seat ourselves in the doorway, while the proprietor (a lithe, keen-eyed Greek, sly-looking enough to sit for the portrait of either Sinon or Epialtes) serves out to my comrades a jorum of brandy, and to me a bottle of lemonade. Our new acquaintance, emptying his tumbler at a draught, clears his throat and begins to tell us that the rebels have been defeated in a great battle by Redif Pasha, that he has driven them back into the interior, and is now preparing to besiege Reyda, their chief stronghold and principal magazine, the capture of which will probably put an end to the war. "But mark ye, they've got some pluck, them rebels—blowed if they hain't. In that 'ere battle I was talkin' on, they comed right up to the muzzles o' the guns three times over, with the round shot a-rippin' through 'em like blazes every time. We've got the 'ead o' the big chief's younger brother on board, sewn up in a bag for to go to Constantinople; and a werry nice present it'll be for Mr. Sultan."

"Have you brought any prisoners up?" ask I.

"We hain't; but there's a lot on 'em a-comin' on by land, and I reckon they oughter to be here to-morrer or the day arter. When they does come, you'll see just about the ugliest sight as ever you see'd in your life."

\* Similar dwellings are common among the Cossacks of the Don, and the Kirghis and Kalmucks of the Eastern steppes, where I first saw them.

I remembered his words three days later, when, in the glory of the tropical sunset, the long line of miserable objects, gaunt with famine, and reeling with exhaustion, their tongues lolling out from thirst, their unbandaged wounds grimed with dust and black with sand-flies, came winding down to the shore.\* Most of the faces had settled into the blank apathy of despair; but here and there, in some half-closed eye lurked a gleam of hatred which no suffering could diminish. A sadder or a ghostlier sight no man could look upon; but I have neither the time nor the inclination to dwell on it here.

And so the talk proceeds, merrily enough. After such a march in such a temperature, this little chat in the shade, over our morning draught, is rather enjoyable, but it is a very short-lived enjoyment. The apparition of five Feringhees in their own outlandish dress is sufficiently rare in this remote corner of the earth to gather round us a triple ring of curious gazers, bringing with them a collection of strange odours that would astound a drain-digger. This, indeed, is only what we are already accustomed to; but even this is not all. The "real live shop" proves to be so in fatal earnest. As I sit in the doorway, a spider about the size of an ordinary saucer suddenly descends from the lintel, Blondin-fashion, by a rope of his own manufacture, and proceeds to hold a private rehearsal of gymnastics on the front of my turban. The next moment, a black cockroach, an inch and half long, falls with loud splash into the captain's tumbler, just as he is raising it to his lips, while at the same instant our interpreter comes bumping out of his corner with a cry of dismay, hotly pursued by an immense scorpion. I begin to recal my old friend Gadabout's description of a Chinese fair, where "all my senses, sir, were offended at once; my eyes by ugly faces; my ears by horrid din; my nose by a well-selected assortment of all the bad smells in the world, and sundry others invented for the occasion; my taste by messes of dogs, and frogs, and cats, and rats, and bats, made worse in the cooking; and my sense of feeling by twenty-seven distinct species of vermin in hard training." Clearly this will not do. We swallow our liquor hastily, and troop off en masse.

I need not recount the subsequent adventures of the day—how we made the circuit of the fort, and found the eastern

angle a mere heap of crumbling stones, with one rusty cannon sticking up perpendicularly from the mass, like a holly-twig in an over-boiled pudding; how we explored the outskirts of the town, till the sight of a knot of Arabs dogging us suggested the wisdom of a retreat; how we went down to the shore and had a long swim, in the course of which I was nearly picked up by a shark, probably the transformed spirit of some Turkish custom-house officer; how we went coral-hunting along the reefs, with considerable success; and how, in wading through the shallow pools, our feet got so smartly scalded by the heat of the water, that we were fain to come out upon the sand to cool them—causing our skipper to remark, not unnaturally, "Well, now, I wonder if I was to tell 'em at home as how there's a country where folk goes into the sea to get warm, what kind o' liar 'ud they call me!"

But the last sight that we saw that day is one which I have not yet forgotten, and can never forget. As we march across the skirt of desert on our way back to the town, our interpreter suddenly points a little to the left, and says, "There are the graves of the Turkish soldiers!" We halt and look at them in silence. Here are no stately sculptures or well-turned epitaphs—only a few score low mounds of dust, already half effaced by the winds of the desert; yet of all the countless graves which I had seen, there were none that impressed me like these. I had seen, upon the green slopes of Brittany, the crumbling headstones, garlanded with immortelles, beneath which sleep the countrymen of Duguesclin and Georges Cadoudal. I had watched the shepherds of Switzerland, beneath the shadow of the everlasting hills, lower into its grave, to the sound of a plaintive Vaudois hymn, the coarse pinewood coffin which held all that the avalanche had spared of their youngest and bravest. In the quaint little churchyards of remote German villages, I had spelled out half-effaced texts of Scripture, or fragments of some grand old Lutheran psalm. I had stood, in Denmark, on the ground where those whom Nelson's cannon slew before Copenhagen, and those who fell by Prussian needle-guns at Dybbøl, sleep in one common grave, marked with the simple inscription, "Died for the Fatherland," with the sweet spring-flowers blooming above them, and bright-eyed children bringing their little cans of water to sprinkle the graves of the fathers and brothers whom they never knew. Beneath the forest shades of ancient Sweden,

\* Many of these men were afterwards forcibly drafted into the Turkish army, with what result I have not yet heard.

I had gazed upon the grassy mound that held the dust of the aged pastor, surmounted by a simple cross carved by the hand of his son. I had seen, amid the endless plains of Central Russia, the rough-hewn crosses beneath which lie the men of Krasnoë and Borodina. Far away in the solitudes of the Arctic Ocean, I had lighted upon spray-lashed slabs of rock on the brink of the unresting sea, marking the last resting-places of the sailor patriarchs of Shetland and Faroe. On the sunny hill-sides of the Danube I had seen Russian triumphal columns looking down upon the buried soldiers of Nicholas, in the heart of a region whence the glory of Russia has long since departed. I had wandered through the picturesque graveyards of Constantinople. I had scaled the mighty monuments of human nothingness, which, on the verge of the everlasting desert, still preserve the memory of the Pharaohs. But in all the long panorama I had seen nothing more sad or touching than this. Thousands of miles from home, in hostile soil, amid a race which curses and spits at their graves every time it passes them, they lie unnoticed and unknown—nameless heroes, who knew only how to die in their obedience.

These were not stirred by passion,  
Nor yet by wine made bold;  
'Twas not renown that moved them,  
Nor did they look for gold.

To them their leader's signal  
Was as the voice of God;  
Unswerving, uncomplaining,  
The way of death they trod.

And around the spot where they lie, the snakes rustle through the drifting sand, and the camels go by with their long, noiseless stride in the glory of the sunset; and the great sea and the lonely desert keep watch over their graves for ever.

"Well," mutters our skipper, looking down upon the graves, "if this here work's agoin' to go on every year, I wonder how long 'ull the Turks be able to stand it?"

That question is one which Turkey has still to answer.\*

### A NOVEL RACE.

THERE is something in a race of any kind which appeals at once to the sympathies of Englishmen. The announcement of a forthcoming "event" awakens a responsive chord even in the sternest and most business-like bosom. I firmly believe

\* Since the above was written, I have learned that fresh disturbances have broken out both in Arabia and in Irak.

that, clever as Mr. Oliphant's book undoubtedly is, a large portion of Her Majesty's liege subjects was sorely disappointed on finding that The Coming Race was only a book, and not even a betting-book at that. Is this feeling merely the Anglo-Saxon development of the passion for gambling, which among Latin races contents itself with a pack of cards in a stuffy room, but among Englishmen requires a breezy heath for its board of green cloth, and highly-bred horses or highly-trained men for its cards or dice? I think not, and am inclined to refer the English love for a race of any kind to a healthy sympathy with emulation in every walk of life, and somewhat also to the grand old "*certaminis gaudia*" inherited from those doughty Norse pirates, our most worthy ancestors.

It might perhaps have been thought that the ingenuity of man had been so thoroughly ransacked that a new description of race was almost an impossibility; but it has been reserved for the enterprising gentleman who rejoices in spiky moustaches and the title of the Peoples' Caterer, to demonstrate the contrary.

A postman's race was, the other day, announced to take place at North Woolwich Gardens, over a three-hundred-yards course planted with trees at a distance of about ten yards from each other; to each tree was to be affixed a number, a knocker, and a letter-box, and the men being started in heats of four (each man provided with the same number of letters) the duty of each competitor was to deliver the regulation postman's knock at each tree, drop a letter in the box, and, getting over the ground as rapidly as possible, either by running or walking, to return to the starting-post. To prevent this curious race from resolving itself into a mere trial of speed—instead of speed and accuracy combined—the whole sixty letters representing the number of leafy houses to be called at in going and returning, were not to be served out to each man, but a dozen letters were to be withdrawn at random from each batch, while a single false delivery among the forty-eight remaining numbers was to distance the unfortunate blunderer. Prizes were to be given to the winner of the grand heat, the winners of the trial heats, and also to the second and third in each heat.

The novelty of the event, and the peculiarly business-like character of the arrangement, attracted my attention, and it was with some surprise that I discovered a paragraph going the round of the papers, not



only stating that the chiefs of the Postal Department declined to smile official sanction on the undertaking, but throwing as much cold water upon it as possible. That the authorities should decline to take any trouble about the matter was conceivable enough, but it appeared to your contributor that they certainly travelled out of the record in administering a public snubbing to the projector. A postman when he gets a holiday—no very frequent occurrence—has clearly as good a right to attend a race, or even to take part therein, as any other citizen.

Entertaining some grave doubts as to the probable effect of the official wet-blanket thrown over the project, I betake myself on a fine summer afternoon to Fenchurch-street Station, and proceed to discover North Woolwich Gardens. Even to the most florid imagination the scenery by the way can hardly appear romantic. Tall chimneys, huge factories, long, straight rows of dusty brick cottages, acres of linen hanging out to dry, and forlorn fields of smoky-looking cabbages compose the features of the arid landscape. At length some huge gasometers—like mushrooms of a monstrous growth emerging from the plain—heave in sight, and in a few minutes we are at the gardens famous for baby, barmaid, monkey, and other shows. Although some thousands of people are present, there is plenty of room for everybody. The blue uniforms of the postmen pervade the entire gardens, and the wives and families, the friends and adherents of those honest fellows, muster strongly. The swings are doing a roaring trade, and the proprietor of a huge iron roundabout of the bicycle order of architecture can hardly accommodate the numerous customers, who seem hugely to appreciate the fun of working very hard to spin—like horizontal squirrels—round in a circle. Tom Tag—gorgeously arrayed in a new and painfully shiny hat, and a fearfully and wonderfully tight suit of clothes—is walking on the river terrace holding forth energetically, as it seems, to Wilhelmina, in a neat crisp cotton print. I am inclined to suspect that T. T. is doing his best to persuade his blushing companion to name the “day, the happy d-a-a-y,” and is asserting his unalterable determination to forthwith “bu-u-uy the ring.”

But, perhaps, like Mr. Blenkinsop, I am “preematoor,” and Tom is only urging his lady-love to join in the antiquated but by no means obsolete pastime of kiss-in-the-

ring. Wilhelmina proves coy, however, and insists on marching Tom up to talk to Jack Ratchet, from the engine factory hard by, who is making holiday, and having a good time with his wife and children, the latter rather numerous, but nicely graduated as to size, like a set of human pandean pipes. It is lucky for those little ones that Jack is a skilled workman, and steady withal, as his smart broadcloth and gold watch-chain testify, or those poor little pipes would play a very dismal tune in these days of dear beef. Young Sloper and Tom Dashall, those rapid youths, who are spending their mosaic-golden youth, who revel in exiguous coats, wonderful shirt-collars, astounding breast-pins, endless champagne, and B. and S., are conspicuous by their absence. The style of amusement at North Woolwich is too primitive to suit their already jaded palates. But the simple, jovial holiday-makers are getting on very well without these sparks, and the laughter of merry children rings sweetly in the summer air, especially at the blissful moment when a huge tray arrives laden with fragrant tea, mighty heaps of shrimps in their ruddy brown armour, whole forests of green water-cresses, and bread-and-butter galore.

But the postmen entered for the race are beginning to collect at the end of the course—the dark blue uniforms gradually sifting themselves out of the crowd of merry-makers—and come to the front with the air of men who have a great undertaking before them. Some few of the competitors have gone to the length of laying aside their uniform altogether, and attired in jerseys, with over-coats tied round their necks by the sleeves in the approved athletic style, contrive, by their would-be pedestrian get-up, to slightly mar the symmetry of some of the races.

The People's Caterer and his merry men are busily employed clearing the course, and the general public relinquish with evident reluctance, the new and delightful amusement of trying the different knockers, a sport which has kept many youths and maidens in high good humour during the afternoon, and heavily taxed the powers of much-enduring paterfamilias in raising his olive branches to the level of the coveted noise-producer. The course is cleared at last, the trees, all duly accounted with knocker, box, and number, are counted, and preparations are made for the start.

There is no betting on the postman's race. No “monkeys” are offered on the field; no perspiring Stentors conjure me to



back one, or proclaim their readiness to bet fabulous odds, "bar one." There are no quiet, business-like inquiries whether I know anything; nor have I been interviewed by the seedy man of benevolent tendencies who is always burning to impart his knowledge of a "good thing," thus weakly frittering away his preternatural information on others, for the state of his hat affords ample evidence that the good things profit him but little. No private trials have taken place, and no straight tip as to the form of the competitors is volunteered. Dim rumours of the prowess of the Walking Postman float in the air, but no one is rash enough to spend his money in making a favourite.

At last all is ready, and the four men drawn in the first heat stand ready, each man with his packet of cards in his hand. One of these, the stalwart fellow in a grey jersey, is a good specimen of that well-known character in all racing matters—the litigious competitor. He has been in great force all the afternoon, asking endless questions, and worrying the great caterer by propounding to him knotty points as to disqualification, the exact meaning of each and every one of the conditions, the choice of umpires, and such-like tough and uncomfortable subjects. I have a great hope that he will be beaten; and my sympathies are undoubtedly with the lithe young fellow in plain clothes, who says nothing, but takes up his letters and his position in silence.

The word is given, away they go, and at a clipping pace. Rat-tat, rat-tat, rat-tat, the air seems full of the postman's knock, so rapidly do the rat-tats succeed each other. The stout competitor, who went off with a tremendous rush, is dropping into the rear already, and his interesting family, craning over the ropes to "see papa win," is doomed to disappointment. I hope the discomfiture of papa on this occasion will not shake the faith of the family in its head. By Jove, the litigious man is leading; I can see his detestable grey jersey well in front. They have turned the corner, and are now racing back, but Grey-Jacket has lost the pride of place. The quiet man leads; rat-tat, rat-tat, rat-tat; Grey-Jacket makes a final effort, but the quiet competitor wins in a canter.

The litigious man is placed second; and, true to the last, no sooner recovers his breath than he lodges an objection against the winner for going on the wrong side of a tree. The objector takes but little by his

motion though, for Number One has gone over the whole course, and delivered all his letters correctly, so the objection is quietly overruled. But the objector, though disposed of officially, hovers about for hours in a discontented manner, and putting on the air of one who has been deeply wronged, pounces like a sort of mail-carrying Ancient Mariner upon any unfortunate wight who may be weak enough to listen to the yarn of the litigious one. The heats now follow each other in rapid succession, and the interest is well kept up by the crowd of families and sympathisers. Meanwhile twilight falls softly over the broad river; the lights gleam brightly from the Woolwich shore; the illumination of the gardens commences; those excellent comedians "the Paynes" are filling a crowded theatre with merry peals of laughter; music strikes up on the platform and dancing begins; but my dancing days, like the postmen's races, are things of the past, and stepping into a railway carriage, I am soon once more in London's "seething cauldron."

#### OCTOBER.

GREY-TINTED glide the clouds across the sky,  
Murky the gloaming; and the mist-bound fens  
White frosty wreaths of vaporous damp exhale,  
Veiling the onward steps of coming night.  
The golden plover wheels across the marsh,  
The crooning mallard on his blue-barred wing,  
Sinks to his reedy lair: the bittern booms,  
And speckled curlews, ranked in Indian file,  
Fly homewards wailing in harsh monotone,  
The evening dirge that marshals them to rest.

October's touch paints all the maple leaves  
With brilliant crimson, and his golden kiss  
Lies on the clustered hazels: scarlet glows  
The sturdy oak, and copper-hued the beech:  
A russet glory lingers on the elm,  
The pensile birch is yellowing apace,  
And many-tinted show the woodlands all,  
With autumn's dying splendours.

In the copse  
Crows the cock-pheasant, all his gorgeous breast  
A-glow with emerald and amethyst;  
His purple neck with crimson gorget hung,  
Outstretched to banquet with his dun-clad mate  
Upon the luscious beech-mast. On the pine,  
The dark-crowned, needle-armed, sombre pine,  
The exultant black-cock tunes his clarion shrill,  
As from the cones he takes his evening meal,  
And sounds his latest challenge ere the night.

'Neath the green leafage rank of turnip-field  
Crouches the partridge, on her ashen breast  
Her brown wing folded: and with ears up-prieked  
Bounds the white-breasted hare from off her form,  
Across the clover-glade: the acorns ripe  
Are gathered by the dormouse, squirrels crouch  
Warm in their nests, with ample provender  
For many a wintry day.

Now homeward hies  
The whistling faggot-laden peasant-boy;  
His daily task is over, and the hearth  
Glowing bright before his vision—welcome goal,  
Spurring the tired stripling to his rest!

What though his evening meal be homely fare,  
Brown bread and milk, potatoes, or, perchance,  
A scrap of home-cured bacon? Daintier 'tis  
To the toil-hungered palate than the meats  
Unseasoned by the rest of industry,  
That tempt the jaded appetites of kings.

Welcome October! coronalled with wealth,  
Of Nature's pure coined gold! Upon thy brow  
Thou bear'st the mint-stamp of prosperity,  
The almoner of bounteous Providence,  
Thou crownest all the toiling, teeming year  
With rich fruition: and thy purpled vines,  
Thy russet clusters, are but symbols given  
To Earth of His dear love who ruleth Heaven!

### THE ARMY ON ITS LEGS.

THIRTY barrels of good humming ale await the gallant Southern army—the brave, the thirsty, the dusty, the indefatigable invaders of our English soil. Yes, thirty casks, brimming with the sherry-coloured extract of English malt and hops, oddly enough await the representatives of a burning and slaughtering foe, eager to give our barns and homesteads to the flames, and our quiet English vicarages and country houses to soldiers' fury and rapine. Happy country where all this is mere make-believe and holiday show, and not grim, bloody, wrathful, earnest war.

The thirty barrels, in a portly double row, stand on Squire Groveley's green, velvety lawn. All round the stately park gate the country people muster in wondering crowds waiting for the glorious vision of gold and scarlet, shining steel, and neighing horses. Queer old shepherds, brown and gaunt, stand by their homely, shrewd-looking wives in silent expectancy; the big lads reconnoitre the distant roads, with their buxom lasses by their side; the children run and play under the trees, unawed by the presence of the squire's choleric bailiff, of the head-groom, who is master of the ceremonies, or of the head-keeper, the stern supervisor of their fathers. Some country girls, from the next village, are picturesquely strewn about under the park wall, where they laugh, chatter, and criticise each other's lovers after the manner of youth's golden age. In a tent near the barrels various assistants burnish basketfuls of tumblers, test the quality of the beer, tap casks, and arrange seats. Under the trees the gentry of the neighbourhood are moored in waggonettes, basket-carriages, and traps, while pretty girls in Dolly Varden hats exchange kindly salutations, and discuss the one subject—the arrival of the Southern army on its way to its encampment on Fonthill Down

a mile away. The park looks its best in the September sunlight, and across the lake there are glimpses of the white tents of an advanced post. The deer, careless of such intruders, feed on the brow of the valley across the lake, and, heedless of approaching festivities, see no danger to themselves in the gathering crowd. Two or three stray soldiers talk to the country girls under the trees, and point up the road with the switches they have just cut on their march.

On the battlements of the squire's house fluttering colours mark female guests, who look out afar like the lady in the Scotch ballad who saw the Earl of Murray "come sounding through the town." There is a great lunch at Squire Groveley's, and the country families are arriving fast in yellow barouches and snug broughams full of ladies. Every now and then an orderly dashes through the park on his way to the spot where the camp is to be, and announces the speedy approach of the army. The excitement is renewed by a stray hussar riding as if for dear life, and is culminated by the flight past us of a real lancer, the pennon on his spear fluttering as he dashes along. By-and-bye a general and two or three officers ride up to the house, and the host and hostess are seen to advance and greet them. The head-groom—who is running up and down the rows of casks, and in and out the tent—upon the sight of the general, makes a dash at the ha-ha that separates the squire's garden from the park, and two or three grooms race after him, to hold their horses.

Presently there is a moving of scarlet, and round the angle of the road come half a dozen of the Coldstream Guards, with a sergeant at their head. Two of the men carry on their shoulders poles with flags or pieces of canvas wrapped round them, and it is murmured that these are soldiers sent forward to mark out the infantry camp. The hospitable head-groom instantly flies at them with glasses of ale, and in two minutes the men have piled arms, thrown down their grey knapsacks, unfastened their belts, taken off their great black bearskins, and posed themselves unconsciously into an effective theatrical group. And here, it may be observed, that for the first time we discovered that the British soldier on every possible occasion dons a red nightcap. Clipped close as he is, he probably fears cold; hot as he generally is on the march, he possibly dreads catarrh; certain it is that in camp, or on the halt, in trenches, or at meals, he literally revels in red

nightcaps, a fact by no means to be overlooked by the writer on the humours of the autumn manoeuvres. Here comes another lancer, who the moment he has seen the thirty barrels, instantly, as if they were an enemy's battery, reins his wiry-looking horse on its haunches, and gallops back to whence he came, like a scout who had made a valuable reconnoissance. In vain the head-keeper signals him with a frothing ale-glass; away he flies, with a spurt of dust on the road, a splash of black earth on the spurned turf, and is round the corner in no time.

But now comes a bitter disappointment. To the hasty lancer succeeds another orderly in undress uniform, who reins up to where the bailiff's red face glows like a friendly harbour-light, and announces that the gallant army, tired with a fifteen miles' march from Blandford, has gone round another way to the downs, and that Squire Groveley's hospitality has been all in vain. The head-keeper, in sheer vexation, runs three times up and down the line of barrels, and eventually vaults over the ha-ha to acquaint the squire with the dismal disaster. A group of ladies, led by the hostess, emerge on the garden-terrace, look forlornly at the line of barrels, then return in dismay to the lunch. By-and-bye the barrels will be carted away for the coming harvest home, and so the squire's good intentions are frustrated.

The sight in Groveley Park melts away like a dream. The country people break up into groups. The head-keeper, with one arm on a cask, meditatively listens to the bailiff's consolation. Disappointed in one place, we try our luck in another, and urge our fiery dog-cart to the downs to intercept, if possible, the advancing Southern army, in spite of its shabby conduct to our good friend the squire. Up a long winding country lane, between fields of turnips and half-cut golden barley, we drive furiously as did the son of Nimshi. We can see two hussars taking a short way up a cart-road towards the downs, where the cavalry are already encamped.

A gradual sense comes over us of being surrounded by soldiers, for we presently meet a string of mounted dragoons in careless dress and nightcaps, each man leading a horse. Some of the dragoons are rating their horses, others coaxing them, nearly all are smoking, as they go down to the squire's lake for water. Yes, the infantry are expected every moment, so again we urge on our wild career, and turn into the by-

road after the two avant-courier hussars, who seem as inseparable as the two grenadiers of Heine's fine ballad.

We debouch at last upon the downs, the broad rolling, the once lonely downs. What a transformation! What! this the downs that stretches unbroken for thirty miles—all the way from Amesbury and Great Stonehenge to Warminster, and the outstretched blue plain of Dorsetshire? What! this the quiet range of turf where I used to stretch myself on my stomach like a serpent, and practise for hours at the five hundred yards' range, no one near me but rabbits and crows; my only other visitors the watchful wheat-cars, reconnoitring from the little grassy ant-hills, purple with flowering thyme? Haven't I blazed away whole summer afternoons and seen only one white awninged market-cart come jogging down that white streak of road, which cuts the green turf like a chalk-line on a billiard-table, and winds down through the fir-wood from Codford. Was there ever any sound here to answer the sharp tang of my bullets on the iron target but the linnetsong from the golden gorse, or the lark's blithe hymn in the blue sky overhead? But, beshrew me, now, the downs is alive with warlike men and caparisoned horses, and long rows of white tents have sprung up thick as mushrooms. A canvas city has arisen, sudden as a dream-world, and the ring of trumpet, the clash of sword and scabbard, the shout of soldiers, the cry to distant comrades, the stern word of command, fill the astonished air. Here is a group of lancers, half the men stretched out asleep, but still holding the bridles of their patient horses. Here a tent round which half-dressed soldier-workmen stitch at red jackets, mend saddles, or tug out handfuls from brown trusses of hay. Here are soldiers building fires under walls of turf, stirring kettles, or tending boiling pots. Here stands a group of dismounted dragoons beating the horizon with field-glasses. The Northern army is across the Wiley, not far off, and the Southern videttes are out in all directions.

"Been out on the scout, Baker?" cries an hussar, as a tired dragoon, his legs still bowed with a long scour across country, ties up his horse and strides into a tent, growling an affirmative as he disappears.

"I hope the infantry will soon be here," says another hussar to his comrade, "or they Northerners might attack us through that wood before we could get our men up."

"There they come, sure," said a grey-

coated gentleman-farmer of the true Wiltshire breed, jolly, frank, and hearty, "over the brow of that hill, behind those baggage-carts."

It was the Rifles with some guns, followed by dark masses of infantry. They flow on down the road, rolling like a sluggish dark flood, and behind them glows something red. Those are the Guards. Soon the Rifles spread down the valley over the turf, and form in long black lines, while the red stream behind them widens and widens, speckled white here and there with shoulder belts and other accoutrements. They are to camp down in the valley, in a line with my old, now dismantled, rifle-butts. Some of the officers come riding up towards the cavalry to ask for news. While we look with pleasant consternation at this invasion of our native soil, fresh regiments, in solid red masses, keep marching diagonally across the valley, and draw up here and there in close formation. Presently they ground arms, and in small companies decant off into the lines of tents that have sprung up as we stood there. In a few minutes groups of red specks appear at every tent door; flags mark out the site of the various regiments; the canvas city is peopled—the warlike nomades have arrived to tenant their vagrant homes.

And now we steer homeward up a steep, stone-strewn hill, and come upon the commencement of the two miles of baggage waggons, one long, jolting, dusty, unbroken line. Sturdy, thick-set waggons they are, each drawn by four strong horses, with two soldier-drivers as postillions, and escorts of armed men in the true military manner, just as if at any moment pistols might bang, sabres flash, and mounted robbers swoop down upon their prize. The waggons differ sufficiently to be interesting. Here comes a field-telegraph station, and after it drags a huge boat on wheels, ready for the engineers when they require supports for an impromptu bridge. After the pontoons, jumbles by a big waggon full of planks and beams, a cart full of tents, or a contractor's van, with meat, beans, or oats. There is great work putting on the massive drags that fix the hind wheels down the steep hill, and now and then an ammunition waggon is interpolated among vans full of merry, noisy, country sight-seers. It is all we can do to avoid the remorseless wheels, for some of the soldier-postillions are careless, some reckless, others surly and sullen. Every now and then a

hand, held warningly up, checks the long procession, and spreads angry confusion for half a mile backwards at least. The soldiers on foot, and the dismounted drivers, seem as ravenous and unscrupulous as locusts about all green food they meet, and many a rank handful of clean, white, half-grown turnips is pulled up and crammed into holsters, haversacks, and saddle-bags.

"How dare you touch those turnips? Put them down directly," cried a young mounted officer as he rides past a plunderer.

"Got permission, sir," is the ready but not strictly veracious answer of the sunburnt driver. "Like his cheek," he says, as the officer rides away, "to think I was going to throw them away after all my trouble." And he crams them into the white canvas bag on his left side.

Half the old decorated soldiers who tramp on as escorts of the luggage waggons wear the undress nightcap, and look by no means unlike guerilla banditti. Among the gallant volunteer escort there are faces and demeanours worthy of Punch, and one long-faced Highlander, with a glass in his rueful left eye, strikes me as peculiarly droll from the loyal Scotchman's evident self-satisfaction at his own appearance as a veteran on active service. At last the final waggon, a sort of sutler's venture of tin cans and lemonade bottles, rickets past us, and we are on the road alone. The only sign of an army left is an empty box turned up at the corner of the road, with "To the Camp" chalked upon it by some considerate native. Three hours later, after dinner, we go out up one of the lanes leading to the downs, and see, stretching away for a mile or more, the long line of camp fires, in a region where ordinarily o' nights a light stronger than a glow-worm's would puzzle and astonish. And when we discover, black against the dark horizon, the long line of Squire Groveley's fir-woods, we remember that a night attack by the watchful Northern army is dreaded, and that every path and riding is paced by the sleepless Southern sentinels.

Not long after daybreak the next morning I am again on the long stony lane leading up to the now populous downs, riding by the side of an old Indian officer, who takes a veteran's contemptuous view of the present system of autumn manoeuvres. Another moment and the long streets of the canvas city will open before our eyes. Imagine Aladdin when he woke and found his palace flown, and only the drear brown desert before him, and you see me standing



up in my stirrups and rubbing my eyes to find only half a dozen tents (one of which drops and is packed away as I gaze), half a dozen dragoon horses, and ten or twelve cumbersome baggage-waggons, already on the move. Yes, the camp is broken up, and Sir John Michel is off to seize the fords of the Wiley. There is nothing left but some heaps of hay, some sacks of oats, a heap of firewood, countless black circles, made by the fires we saw last night, and long trampled lines where the tents had stood. We look into one officer's tent, still standing, with the owner's towel drying on one of the cords, and a pair of cavalry boots standing by as if they were the officer's legs that had been shot off in a morning skirmish. A trumpet sounds, and the dragoons saddle their horses that are picketed near this tent. One of the men, a reckless-looking young fellow, is so tipsy that he lets his horse go, and it gallops off across the down, luckily soon headed back by a fusileer quarter-master who is on escort duty. When the horse is brought back, the drunken lad lashes it with a bridle till it backs into the other horses and begins kicking dangerously. Then two or three dragoons knock over their inebriated comrade, who rolls helplessly under the charger's legs, and eventually is thrown down headlong on the turf with force enough to beat in his brass helmet.

"Seize that man, corporal," cries the sergeant, and two or three dragoons advance towards the too social youth, who however shows fight, and looks savage enough to use his sword or carbine if he unluckily has them about him.

"D— fuss," he cries, "about a little drink; one would think I was a deserter."

The good-natured quarter-master comes up, expostulates with him, and leads him to the straps of a baggage-waggon, whose drivers are already mounted for the start. The tipsy soldier clings helplessly to the waggon.

"We are all friends here, Baker," says Mentor, the quarter-master; "your only enemy is yourself."

"Stand off, Davy," said the infuriated mutineer; "none of them will touch me, and do you know why, Davy? do you know why? Because they're afraid."

Just then the officer reads the roll-call, the men answer to their names, and at the approach of the move off the obstreperous dragoon cools down and answers in a wandering way to his name.

"How these fellows drink," said my

friend. "I've seen them bawling for beer and cider at every house they pass. The gentry and farmers are so hospitable with champagne to the officers, and beer to the men, that it is enough to demoralise the whole army; and, goodness, how they steal turnips and kill hares. I should only like to have them at Peshawar for a week; I'd soon let them know."

A beery-looking hussar, in very dirty undress, came up just then, and explained vaguely, but at great length, his views of Sir John Michel's tactics. He wanted to know if he should get us some porter from the canteen, and enlarged on the merits of several generals who were never off the saddle from two in the morning till twelve at night. He told us that a Northern spy had been made prisoner in the camp last night; his uniform was hidden by a waterproof. He added that every one must wear a Southern badge (a white band round the left arm), and he wants to sell us one.

"Disgraceful," said my friend, as the fellow at last shambled off to help load a hospital waggon; "a regular cadger, and every other word a lie. What good now is a drunken idle rascal like that?"

As we ride on after the army, an old farmer trots up to us on his cob, his Wiltshire dialect broader than ever from excitement. He has just been made prisoner in his own turnip-field by two lancers.

"A pretty thing," he says; "and I told them I'd more right there than they had—that's what I said."

"Going in for much compensation?" says my friend, dryly.

"Compensation is all very well," replies the farmer, "but I do hold that one would lose half one's time getting the money. But, there, I may try for a little."

A sharp canter across the downs soon brings us up to the rear of the army. More long rumbling lines of waggons. Here a farrier stopping to nail on a horse's loose shoe, there some hopeless-looking drunken or tired men, sitting in ambulance waggons; and presently a badly packed cart, from which, as we pass, fall some tin cans, some firewood, and a tent-pole, which no one seems to stop for.

Then the downs open to a high plateau, with rolling blue hills beyond, clumps of wood, slopes, and hollows. Below in the valley, hidden by trees, runs the disputed river, bordered by villages. On the plateau several regiments have halted, and are lying down, dotting with scarlet the broad green turf. The Rifles, too, are here

in dark masses, and the great brazen ophicleide of the band glitters in the sun. There are rumours that the enemy has been seen skirting the distant hills towards Amesbury, but we see only a few specks, which may perhaps be mounted reconnoiterers. There is no sound of firing. A telegraph tent is pitched on the down, and the wires, covered with gutta-percha, wind from an iron arch across the road, through the furze bushes and tufts of flowery heather. Some officers tell us that Michel is very anxious to seize the river, as otherwise the camp will have to return to-night to Fonthill Down.

We strike off now across the down by a wood, where some merry country people are lunching in unhorsed vans, to a good point of view. The paths are lined with deep and dangerous ruts, and one has to be wary in riding. A rainy haze suddenly brightens to sunshine as we come upon the main Southern army below in the valley. The Guards are lying down on the stubble in long lines of white-speckled scarlet, waiting for the word to advance. Behind them is the band, every musical instrument sparkling like gold. In a field beyond, the Rifles are advancing along the edge of a barley-field, and making for a gap that leads down to the river. A hare, frightened at their approach, is skimming across the fallows, watched by many eager eyes. Mounted orderlies gallop to and fro with orders.

This division is scarcely out of sight when we see, on a distant hill across the river, a great waft of smoke, out of which comes the roar of a gun. The fighting has commenced. The Southern army is striking for the river ford, and the Northern has seen them. A quarter of an hour more, and we see the Rifles massed on an opposite hill, moving in face of a wood, which, it is supposed, conceals an ambuscade. As we stay our horses to watch, the wood suddenly steams with smoke, and half a second after comes the rattle of musketry, to which the Rifles, nothing loth, reply with equal energy. A short sharp tussle, and the Northerners come pouring out of the wood in full retreat, firing as they retire. The Southern bullets have ferreted them out of their covert, and they fly to higher ground, above a great hollow of the down, difficult of access. Their enemies come scrambling after them. Puffs of smoke, upward and downward, mark the picturesque struggle. Then the battle rolls away over the brow of the hill, and passes from our sight.

"Pack of nonsense," growls my unappeasable companion. "Why did those Northern fellows get miles away from their supports. Pretty generalship, indeed. Well, I suppose we had better see the end of it. They'll give battle now. Hark away, then."

We are soon down across the river to the right, among the Northerners, into Steeple Langford, which we find full of soldiers ready for the advance, for the North, hitherto on the defensive, is to-day to assail the enemy's camp on Codford Down. Horsemen are scouring along, artillery hurrying to the front, generals riding about as if they had lost their staff, or scarcely knew where they had got to—a very possible contingency. We ride along a dusty road, some fields off the river, and find the fords watched by skirmishers behind every tree. To the right the down runs steeply up, in some places almost precipitously. Mounted officers scour up and down the road as if a Waterloo were impending. Some grey horsemen dash along the road. Those are the Hampshire Light Horse. Very gallant they look with their plumed wideawakes; they are well mounted, good riders, and several decorated young officers are among them. We clamber up over the stubble-fields, and find the hedges lined with riflemen, all on the keen outlook for the foe; every bank, tree, and bush hides a man.

"Well placed," said my friend, condescendingly; "that's workman-like. Generally these fellows care no more for cover than if they were facing squirts and pop-guns. Now let's go back to the Southern lot."

So we go. As I cross the boundary, I pass a wood that looks demurely quiet, full as it is of mischief.

"They're in there for a dozen," says my old colonel.

I look in through the green darkness, and soon catch glimpses of scarlet behind the fir-trees and under the banks. The grenadiers, generally with bearskins off—nightcaps again—are in twos and threes, watchful as deer-stalkers. Neither side seems anxious to attack. Neither knows the other's strength. There they stand, like Sir Richard Strachan, waiting with his sword half drawn, while all the while the Earl of Chatham

Is very eager to get at 'em.

Bolder at last, the North creeps forward and dashes at the wood, which instantly shoots

out tongues of fire and volleys of smoke. But the stealthy and daring riflemen still advance, and the Southerners, outnumbered, begin to pour out of the rear of the wood, firing as they go. They dash down a steep slope, fire from the hedge in the valley, and slowly scatter over a field towards their camp. We have dismounted, and left our horses with a boy, and the foe, as they work through the wood, make for a cluster of trees where we stand, urging us forward, and sending my friend the colonel headlong over a stump, from which he rises with many sharp remarks in very choice and emphatic Hindostanee. I, too, suddenly find my left ear apparently blown away by the discharge of the rifle of a too zealous skirmisher, and now ensues a very pretty and effective episode of the bloodless war. The Southern grenadiers, on the opposite hill, seeing their camp threatened, sadderly spread in a long semicircle through the stubble, and intrench themselves on very advantageous ground. Quick as moles the deft spademen dig a long shallow trench, and throw up before it a low embankment. In a few minutes only a few black heads are visible, and the place is ready for the supports, who scramble in.

The Northern riflemen are all down in the lane, lining the hedge, but not willing to advance in front of the rifle-pits, at which they keep up an incessant and harassing, but not perhaps very destructive fire. Squadrons of Life Guards, with sparkling breast-plates, are stealing round the higher downs to turn the flank of the foe, watched by the Tenth Hussars, who are down in the valley on the right of the camp. The North, too, is busy in the Wiley-road, trying to turn the enemy's other flank, and firing untiringly at the retreating skirmishers. To change our point of sight, we stride across the lane, and up the stubbles towards the rifle-pits. In the face of a heavy and well-nourished fire, we leap on the embankment, and over the trench, and get in the rear of the defenders, who are bravely preparing for the worst. Below we see the Rifles gathering near an open gate for the assault, while their supports, in masses of scarlet, are hurrying down from the wood, a terrible target for the bullets they too evidently despise. The trenches are closely packed with the Guards, a sergeant near us is earnestly directing the fire, and urging on the marksmen. All in nightcaps again, and the clumsy bearskins are lying anywhere among the torn blue paper of the cartridge-packets. Two men,

carrying a chest like an enormous cigar-box, run along outside the trench, feeding the men with blue packets of cartridges. The fire is tremendous. Thundering, crashing, withering. It rolls and rages in waves of sound, and the calm sergeant, equal to the occasion,

Rides on the whirlwind, and directs the storm.

So, by-the-bye, does the captain of the Rifles, for now the dark green men advance in mass through the gate, and swiftly advance on the pits. In vain the sergeant cries:

"Now then, watch that gate. Wait a bit, Thompson. Now, then, give it them; let them have it again. Keep it up, boys. Now, then, at that clump on the hill; blaze away, my lads; give it to 'em. We'll teach 'em."

Alas! brave sergeant of the Coldstreams, I see three Northern guns jolt down the slope, stop, turn, and open fire. You must retreat, sons of Mars, and retreat in time. Waggon-loads of cartridges could not save you; and here come the Rifles, chaffing you about your defeat. Fall back. And fall back they do, in long skirmishing lines, while the left side of the intrenchment still hold possession against the riflemen attacking from the road, the most protected side, and there is a grave and angry discussion in the pits as to whether they are or are not beaten.

"I say, sergeant-major," said one officer, not unknown in the West-end, and looking singularly helpless in the bearskin that covers up his eyes, "they say we are enfiladed. What do fellars do when they're enfiladed?"

By this time cannon open fire everywhere, especially to the far right on the South and the far left on the North. The South still retreats in long skirmishing lines, heedless of the most annihilating artillery fire. Cavalry charges are expected, but do not come off.

"Parcel of humbug," says a Scotch Fusilier to me. "I haven't had all my things off since I left Aldershot. All I hope is, the Tenth will get at those Life Guards; and if they do there will be fist-cuffs, for they hate each other like mad."

And now, by a masterly manoeuvre, worthy of Captain Bobadil himself, each army turns a flank of the other, so that the invaders are now cut off from the sea, and the defenders from London, a curious kind of scholar's mate.

"Mashallah," said my friend, slapping

his thigh; "if I don't think any two intelligent country gentlemen hereabouts, taken at random, could have manœuvred the two armies better than that!"

Still the Guards, no one knows why, fall steadily back; still on the left flank the volunteers line the hedges, and blaze away; still through a heavy rain, now set in, everybody fires anywhere, at friend or foe; still the Prince, under a haystack, gets wet, and seems to enjoy it; still the guns crack like maroons at the Crystal Palace; still they blaze away from the distant heights, till the umpires, with the white rosettes, red and confused, ride up and beg every one to stop firing, and to get as soon as possible out of reach of the foreign visitors.

"Well, I never did," vociferates my friend the colonel; "but there is one thing, the worse the fellows do it the more proof it is that manœuvres (though not this particular sort) are required if we want in England to keep up anything but a navy—and a navy, mind you, of untried vessels."

## THE YELLOW FLAG.

By EDMUND YATES,

AUTHOR OF "BLACK SHEEP," "NOBODY'S FORTUNE," &c. &c.

### BOOK III.

#### CHAPTER I. DULY PRESENTED.

THE words of recognition uttered by Mr. Wetter filled Pauline with the utmost consternation. What! was this elegant gentleman who stood before her, with an amused smile on his handsome face, the same Henrich Wetter, the blonde and lymphatic clerk to Monsieur Krebs?

As she stared at him the features grew familiar to her, and she saw that he was practising no deception. Henrich Wetter! He knew all about her former life, then, and, if he chose, could, with a word, destroy the neat fabric of invention which she had so carefully raised. He could tell any one, whose interest it would be to know it, all about her position at the Restaurant du Midi, all about her marriage with Tom Durham, perhaps even some of the particulars of her life since her marriage? It would be most advisable to keep on good terms with a man of so much knowledge. So, all these thoughts having flashed instantaneously through Pauline's mind, she turned to her companion with a look in which astonishment and delight were admirably blended, and stretched out her hand in the frankest and friendliest manner.

"You must not be astonished at my not recognising you, Monsieur Wetter," she said; "it is long since we met, and in the interval you are so much changed, and, if I may say it, so much improved."

Mr. Wetter smiled blandly and easily. "And you, Pauline—" he said.

Pauline started as he pronounced the name. Her husband was the only man who had so addressed her since the old days at Marseilles, and, of course, she had not heard it since his death.

"And you, Pauline," he continued, "how well and handsome you look! how prosperous you seem!"

"Do I, Monsieur Wetter?" she said, with a characteristic shoulder shrug, "do I? It must be then because I have a light heart and a strong will of my own, for I have not been without my troubles, and heavy ones too. However, these are matters in which you could feel no possible interest, and with which I will not pretend to worry you."

"I feel no interest in what concerns you?" said Mr. Wetter, with elevated eyebrows. "Why, what do you imagine brought me to this house?"

"Information that the house was to let, and a desire to see if it would suit your purpose."

"Suit my purpose?" repeated Mr. Wetter, with a half-sneering laugh. "And what do you imagine my purpose to be, Pauline? I am a man of action and of business. It would not suit me to drone away my life in this rural solitude; my home must be in London, where my time is spent."

"Perhaps you came to look at the house for a friend?" said Pauline.

"Wrong again," he cried; "my friends are like myself, men to whom this house, from its situation, would be absolutely useless. Now, what do you say if I were to tell you," he said, leaning on the table, and bending towards her as he spoke, "that the memory of the old days has never passed away from my mind, of the old days when Adolphe de Noailles and I ran neck and neck for the hand of the prettiest girl in Marseilles, and when we were both beaten by the English escroc who took her away from us?"

"Monsieur Wetter," said Pauline, holding up her hand, "he was my husband."

"You are right in saying was, Pauline; for he is dead, and you are free. You see," he added, in amusement at the amazed expression on her face, "I keep myself



tolerably well informed as to the movements of those in whom I have at any time taken an interest."

"And by your—inquiries you learned that I was here?" she asked.

"No," he replied; "truth to tell, that was entirely accidental. I have only just returned from America, and as I was riding by here a few days ago I thought I perceived you at the window. At first I doubted the evidence of my senses, and even when I had satisfied myself I was so completely bouleversé that I could not attempt to come in. I went home meditating on what I had seen, and determining to come out again on the first opportunity. As I rode out to-day I was debating within myself what excuse I could possibly offer for intruding upon you without announcing myself, as I wished to ascertain whether you would recognise me, when the board at the gate, advertising the house to let, fortunately afforded me the necessary excuse, and how the rest of the little comedy was played out you are aware."

Pauline looked at him earnestly for some moments, as though desirous of ascertaining whether he had correctly stated the motive by which he professed himself animated. The result of her survey seemed to be satisfactory, for she said to him, "I need scarcely tell you, Monsieur Wetter, that I am much flattered by what you have said, or that I am very much pleased to see you again."

"And on my part," said he, taking her hand and gallantly raising it to his lips, "I need scarcely say that the pleasure is mutual. I hope I shall often be allowed to visit you in this house?"

"Not in this house," said Pauline. "You forget the board at the gate. There is no deception about that. This house is veritably to let, and we are about to leave it as soon as possible."

"Why?" said Mr. Wetter, interrogatively.

"Why," interrupted Pauline. "I forgot to mention that I am not here alone, and that this is not my house. There is another lady with me."

"Oh, indeed; another lady?" said Wetter, brightening. "And who may she be?"

The change in his manner was not lost upon Pauline. "She is a lady who has just lost her husband," said she, coldly. "Her bereavement is so recent, and she feels it so acutely, that she will see no one, nor will she remain in this house where she lived with him."

"Poor creature," said Mr. Wetter, shaking his head. "No one with any feeling would desire to intrude upon her. And will you continue to live with her when she moves to a new abode?"

"I shall," said Pauline, still coldly. "She depends upon me greatly for advice and assistance."

"And that new abode will be?" he asked, insinuatingly.

"I cannot say at present," she replied; "nothing is decided; we have, indeed, scarcely had time to look out."

"You will let me know when you have fixed upon a spot, will you not?" he said. "I am going out of town for some shooting, but I shall not be more than a month away; and I should like to carry with me the thought that the renewal of an acquaintance so dear to me is not a mere temporary measure."

His manner was as earnest and as gallant as before, and his eyes were as expressive as his words, but Pauline still answered him coldly: "You shall have a line from me stating where I have pitched my tent if you will tell me where to send it."

He gave her his address in South Audley-street, and, as there was nothing more to be done, rose and took his leave. As he bade her adieu he once more raised her hand to his lips, and reiterated his hope of speedily hearing from her.

Pauline walked to the window, and looked out after him. She heard his retreating footsteps, but it was too dark to see his figure. Then, as she turned away, her face was set and rigid, and she muttered to herself, "Connu, monsieur! connu! Though I was very nearly being taken in by your bland manner and the softly sympathetic voice in which you spoke of those old memories. If it had not been for that sly look at the corner of your eyes, which you always had, and which I recognised at once when you spoke of the subject in which you were really interested, I might have imagined that it was on my account you had taken the trouble to ride out here, that to renew your friendship with me was the one great wish of your life. It is all plain to me now. He has seen Alice, and is dying for an introduction to her. He tried to avail himself of the circumstance of the house being to let, was baffled for the moment when he recognised me, but had sufficient mother wit to enable him to concoct a story by which I was so nearly taken in! I, with whom all vanity ought to have died out years ago, whose know-

ledge of the world ought to have led me at once to suspect the hollowness of Monsieur Wetter's profession!

"He wants an introduction to Alice, that is it, undoubtedly; and for what end? He is amazingly changed, this gargon! He is no longer lymphatic, romantic in the highest degree, mawkish, or Teutonic; he rides on horseback, and affects the air of conquest. There is about him a smack of the gallant, of the *coursur des dames*. He is a man whom Alice would not like, but still it is as well that she did not see him at this particular time. He is going out of town, he said; when he comes back we shall have moved to another house, our change of address will not be recorded in the fashionable newspapers, and, as I shall take care that it is not sent to Monsieur Wetter in South Audley-street, it is probable that he will know nothing about it. And so," she added, drawing down the blinds as she heard Alice's footsteps on the stairs, "bon soir, Monsieur Wetter."

And for his own part, Mr. Wetter, as he rode back to London, was full of his reflections.

"What a wonderful thing," he thought to himself, "that I should have come across Pauline Lunelle in that house, and how lucky that I recognised her instantly, and was enabled, by playing upon her vanity, to put her off the scent of the real motive of my visit, and induce her to believe that I had come to see her. Let me see; all the points of the story seem to fit and dove-tail together admirably. Pauline spoke of her companion as a widow—yes, that's right. I saw the notice of John Calverley's death just before I left New York. She said, too, that her husband, the escroc, was dead—that, also, is right. I recollect reading the story of his having been drowned some time ago. Ay, and now I remember that it spoke of him, Mr. Durham, as having been in the employ of Messrs. Calverley. This would account for Pauline's presence in that house, and her intended connexion with that pretty girl. So far so good, *je prend mon bien où je le trouve*; and I think in the present instance I shall not have far to look for it. Mademoiselle Pauline Lunelle, *ex-dame du comptoir*, will be too much frightened at the idea of having the story of her own youth set before her friends to refuse to aid me in any way that I may wish."

It was curious to note how Alice had accepted Pauline's companionship as a matter of course, and how she seemed to cling to

the Frenchwoman for society in that dark period of her life. When Martin Gurwood visited her soon after her convalescence, he conducted himself, under Humphrey Statham's directions, with all the formality and authority of a duly appointed guardian, and as such Alice received him. Amongst the business matters which were discussed between them, the appointment of Pauline to her new charge naturally held a prominent place. Martin imagined that he might have had some difficulty in bringing Alice to his views, but Pauline had already made herself so useful and agreeable to the broken-hearted girl, relieving her of all trouble, and showing, without the least ostentation, that she thoroughly sympathised with her grief, that Alice was only too glad to learn that for some time, at least, her home was to be shared by a person so capable of understanding her position and administering to her wants. And Martin Gurwood himself did not fail to notice the alteration in Madame Du Tertre's demeanour, the gentleness of her manner towards Alice, the delicacy with which she warded off any chance allusion that might have pained her, and the eagerness and anxiety she exhibited to do her service. Martin mentioned these facts to Humphrey Statham, who received the communication in the most matter-of-fact manner, and said something to the effect "that he was glad to hear that the Frenchwoman was earning her money," which Martin, who was essentially soft-hearted, and who surrounded everything connected with Alice with a halo of romance, thought rather a brutal speech.

Uncaring in most matters, assenting not languidly—for, poor child, she strove to feign an interest which she did not feel, and failed most signally in the attempt—to all that was proposed to her, Alice had yet one real anxiety, and that was to get away as quickly as possible from Rose Cottage. The place had become hateful to her; everywhere, in the house, in the garden, there was something to remind her of the kind old man who had loved her so, and whom she had lost for ever. She wanted to be rid of it all, not merely the house, but the furniture, with its haunting memories; and most fortunately there arrived one day an American gentleman, whose business compelled him to dwell in England for a few years, during which period he must be two or three times a week in London, and who was so charmed with the cottage and its contents that he took the lease of the first, and purchased the

second "right away," as he expressed it, at the price demanded for it.

Then what was to be done, and where were they to go to? Alice had expressed a decided objection to the country, and it was accordingly decided that the new residence must be either in London itself, or in some immediate suburb. So advertisements in the newspapers were eagerly consulted, and likely house-agents were daily besieged by Martin Gurwood and Statham, until one day, just before the time when it was necessary that Rose Cottage should be given up, the latter gentleman brought word that he had seen what he thought would be a suitable house. It was the corner house in a new street of the old village of Chelsea, and from its side window one had a pleasant glimpse of the river and the green fields and waving trees on the further shore. A neat, unpretending, comfortable little house, neatly and comfortably furnished with the money derived from the sale of the contents of Rose Cottage, suited to Alice's means, where she could live peaceably, exciting less curiosity, perhaps, than in a more retired spot. From nine in the morning till five in the evening scarcely a man, save the tradespeople of the neighbourhood, was seen in the street, but there were plenty of lady-like women and children, with their nursemaids, passing to and fro, and to many of these Alice speedily became known as "the pretty, delicate-looking lady at number nine." All attempts at visiting were declined on the score of Mrs. Claxton's ill health, and the necessity for her maintaining perfect quietude. But Pauline had a bowing acquaintance with several of the neighbours, and was highly popular among the children.

In the early days of their tenancy Martin Gurwood was a daily visitor, and the intense respectability of his appearance did much to influence the neighbours in Alice's favour. On several occasions he was accompanied by Humphrey Statham; and when, after a short time, Martin had to return to his vicarage at Lullington, Mr. Statham came up once or twice a week and took tea with the ladies, both of whom were impressed with his gentlemanly bearing, his modesty, and his practical good sense. They had no other visitors; so it was not astonishing that one evening, when their only servant was out, and Alice feeling somewhat fatigued was lying down in her bedroom, Pauline seated at the window in the dusk seeing a tall bearded gentleman making for the house, imagined him to be Humphrey Statham, and went

herself to let him in. But her surprise was only equalled by her dismay when on looking up, she found herself confronted by Henrich Wetter.

For an instant she stood in the doorway irresolute, but as the new-comer politely but firmly pressed into the passage, she felt constrained to ask him to walk into the parlour, and followed him there.

"Now really I am obliged to call this an exhibition of very bad manners, my dear Madame Durham."

"For Heaven's sake!" cried Pauline, interrupting him. "I am Madame Du Tertre!"

"By all means," said Mr. Wetter, pleasantly, "my dear Madame Du Tertre, then. In the first place you failed in fulfilling your agreeable promise to send me your new address; and when, with infinite labour and pains, I have discovered it, you seem as though you were inclined to close your door against me."

"It was a mistake," murmured Pauline, "I did not recognise you in the darkness; I took you for some one else."

"Took me for some one else," he repeated with a laugh. "Mistook me for some of those gay gallants who besiege your door, and who is out of favour for the time!"

The levity of his tone grated on Pauline's ear. "You are labouring under a mistake, Monsieur Wetter," she said. "We, that is to say I, have but few friends, and certainly no acquaintances of the kind you indicate."

"Do you look upon me as one of those acquaintances of the kind I indicate," said Mr. Wetter, lying lazily back in his chair and smiling placidly at her, "and that it is for that reason you have failed in sending me your address?"

"It is so long since we knew anything of each other, that I should be uncertain in what category of my acquaintance to class you, Monsieur Wetter," said Pauline, becoming desperately annoyed at his self-sufficiency and nonchalance. "The reason that you did not receive my address was, that I had lost yours, and I did not know where to write to you."

"Quite a sufficient excuse," he said, "and no more need be said about the matter, unless I call your attention to the fact, that despite your negligence, I have discovered you, and have brought to that discovery an amount of perseverance and skill which would——"

"Which would have been better employed in a worthier cause," said Pauline, interrupting him.

"A worthier cause!" said Mr. Wetter. "How could that be? There can be nothing better than a restoration of an old friendship, unless," he added, half under his breath, "unless it be the commencement of a new one."

His tone was so eminently provoking, that despite her better reason, Pauline suffered herself to be betrayed into an expression of annoyance.

"It is not the restoration of an old friendship that brings you here, Monsieur Wetter," she said, settling herself stiffly, and glaring at him. "Your memory, of which you prate, cannot serve you very well if you take me for a fool."

"My dear Mademoiselle Lunelle, Madame Durham, Madame—I beg your pardon, I have forgotten the most recent appellation—you do me a serious injustice in imagining that I take you for anything of the kind. The way in which you managed your affairs at Marseilles would have prevented my having any such ideas."

"And yet you think to blind and hoodwink me by pretending that you are very glad to see me."

"I am very glad to see you," said Mr. Wetter, smiling, "I can give you my word of honour of that."

"But why—why, I ask?" said Pauline, vehemently.

"Because I think you can be of use to me," said Mr. Wetter, bending forward, and bringing his hand down with force upon the table. "It is well to be explicit about that."

"Of use to you," said Pauline. "In what way?"

"By introducing me to the lady who was living with you out in that country place where I last had the pleasure of seeing you, who is now living with you in this house. I have taken a fancy to her, and desire the pleasure of making her acquaintance."

"Monsieur, que d'honneur!" exclaimed Pauline, with curling lip, and making him a mock obeisance. "How flattered she ought to be at this proof of your esteem."

"Don't be satirical, Mademoiselle Lunelle—it is best to stick to the name which I know once to have been really yours," said Mr. Wetter, with a certain amount of savageness, "don't be satirical, it does not become you, and it offends me."

"Offends?" cried Pauline.

"Offends," repeated Mr. Wetter. "I have asked you to do nothing extraordinary, nothing but what any gentleman might ask of any lady."

"And suppose I were to refuse—suppose I were to decide from pique, jealousy, or whatever other motive you may choose to accredit me with, that it was inexpedient for me to present you to my friend—what then?"

"Then," said Mr. Wetter, with smiling lips, but with an unpleasant look in his eyes, "I should be forced to present myself. I have made up mind to make this lady's acquaintance, and it's a characteristic of mine, that I invariably carry out what I once undertake, and in making her acquaintance, I should have occasion to inquire how much she knew of the character and antecedents of the person who was domesticated with her."

"You threaten?" cried Pauline.

"Everything," said Mr. Wetter, again bringing his hand down upon the table. "And I not merely threaten, but I execute! Your position at Marseilles, the name and social status of your husband, and the circumstances under which you married him, all these will be news I should think to Mrs.—by the way, you have not told me how the lady calls herself."

While he had been speaking Pauline's head had fallen upon her breast. She raised it now but a very little as she said, "Her name is Claxton, I will present you to her whenever you choose."

"Of course you will," said Mr. Wetter, gaily touching her hand with the back of his. "And there is no time like the present for such a pleasurable interview. She is in the house I suppose?"

"She is," said Pauline.

"Very well then, introduce me at once. By the way, it will be advisable perhaps to say that I am your cousin, or something of that sort. We are both foreigners you know, and English people are not clever in distinguishing between Germans and French, either in name or accent."

Pauline bowed her head and left the room. Five minutes afterwards she returned, bringing Alice with her. Her lips trembled, and her face was deadly pale as she said, "My dear, permit me to present to you my cousin, Monsieur Henrich Wetter."